

FLOWER OF THE NORTH

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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THE STORY THIS FAR
 Philip Whitmore, working partner of a company controlling the fish supply of the Chesapeake Bay, was given by the Canadian Government, himself unknown, a gun and a rifle and sent for a mission to come and help him out. He was to take the gun and rifle to a certain address in the city of Baltimore. He was to take the gun and rifle to a certain address in the city of Baltimore. He was to take the gun and rifle to a certain address in the city of Baltimore.

He turned the forbidden picture to the position in which he had found it against the wall, half ashamed of the act and thoughts into which his curiosity had led him. And yet after all, it was not curiosity. He told himself that as he washed himself and groomed his disheveled clothes.

An hour had passed when he heard a low tap at the door, and Pierre came in. In that time the half-breed had undergone a transformation. He was dressed in an exquisite coat of yellow buckskin, with the same old-fashioned cuffs he had worn when Philip first saw him, trousers of the same material buckled below the knees and boots made of moose skin with fur lining. He wore

hired, gray-faced, and yet a giant. One might have expected from between his bearded lips a voice as thrilling as his appearance; a rumbling voice, deep-throated, sonorous—and it would have caused no surprise. It was the voice that surprised Philip more than the man. It was low, and trembling with an agitation which even strength and pride could not control.

"Any man would have done as much for your daughter," he said at last, "and I am happy that I was the fortunate one to render her assistance."

CHAPTER XXI—(Continued)

Philip sank into a huge arm-chair, cushioned with velvet, and dropped his cap upon the floor. And this was Fort o' God! He scarcely breathed. He was back two centuries, and he stared, as if each moment he expected some manifestation of life in what he saw. He had dreamed his dream over the dead at Churchill; here it was reality—almost; it lacked but a breath, a movement, a flutter of life in the dead faces that looked down upon him. He gazed up at them again, and laughed a little nervously. Then he fixed his eyes on the opposite wall. One of the pictures was moving. The thought in his brain had given birth to the movement he had imagined. It was a woman's face in the picture, young and beautiful, and it nodded to him, one moment radiant with light, the next caught in shadows that cast over it a gloom. He jumped from his chair and went to that he stood directly under it.



"Phil Whitmore, I am Henry d'Arcambal. May God bless you for what you have done."

A current of warm air whirled up his face from the floor. It was this air that was causing movement in the picture, and he looked down. What he discovered broke the spell he was under. About him were the relics of age, of a life long dead. Rubens might have sat in that room, and mourned over his handiwork, lost in a wilderness. The stinky Louis might have recognized in the spindle-legged table a bit of his predecessor's extravagance, which he had sold for the good of the exchequer of France; a Gobelin might have reclaimed one of the woven landscapes on the wall, a Grosselet himself have issued from behind the curtained bed. Philip himself, in that environment, was the stranger. It was the current of warm air which brought him back from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Under his feet was a furnace!

Even the master of Fort o' God, stern and forbidden as Philip began to imagine him, might have laughed at the look which came into his face. Groussier, the cavalier, had he appeared, Philip would have accepted with the same confidence that he had accepted Jeanne and Pierre. But a furnace! He thrust his hands deep in his pockets, a trick which was always the last convincing evidence of his perplexity, and talked slowly around the room. There were two books on the table. One, bound in faded vellum, was a Greek Anthology, the other Drummond's Ascent of Man. There were other books on a quaintly carved shelf, under the picture which had been turned to the wall. He ran over the titles. There were a number of French novels, Ely's Socialism, Sir Thomas More's Utopia, St. Pierre's Paul and Virginia, and a dozen other volumes; there were Bala and Huxley's Darwin's Divine Comedy. Amid this array, like a black sheep lost among the angels, was a finger-worn and faded little volume bearing the name Camille. Something about this book so strangely out of place in its present company, aroused Philip's curiosity. It bore the name, too, which he had found worked in the corner of Jeanne's handkerchief. In a way, the presence of this book gave him a sort of shock, and he took it in his hands, and opened the cover. Under his fingers were pages yellowed and frayed with age, and in an ancient type, once black, the title, The Meaning of God.

He stepped back and swept his arms about the great room. "Everything—everything—would have gone with her," he said. "You had let her die, I should have died. My God, what peril she was in! In saving her you saved me. So you are welcome here, as a son. For the first time since my Jeanne was a babe Fort o' God offered itself to a man who is a stranger and his hospitality is yours so long as its walls hang together. And as they have done this for upward of 200 years, M'sieur Philip, we may conclude that our friendship is to be without end."

He clasped Philip's hands again, and two-fingers caressed down his gray cheeks. It was difficult for Philip to restrain the joy his words produced, which, coming from the lips of Jeanne's father, lifted him suddenly into a paradise of hope. For many reasons he had come to expect a none too warm reception at Fort o' God; he had looked ahead to the place with a grim sort of fear, scarcely definable; and here Jeanne's father was opening his arms to him, Pierre was unapproachable; Jeanne herself was a mystery, billing him alternately with hope and despair; D'Arcambal had accepted him as a son. He could find no words adequate to his emotion; none that could describe his own happiness, unless it was in a bold avowal of his love for the girl he had saved. And this his good sense told him not to make, at the present moment.

It seemed like a strange pointing of the hand of God. "Philip trembled. "We three," he exclaimed. "We three," said the old man, "and for that reason you are a part of Fort o' God!" He led Philip deeper into the great room, and Philip saw that almost all the space along the walls of the huge room was occupied by shelves upon shelves of magazines, masses of papers, piles of maps and paintings. The massive table was covered with books; there were piles on smaller tables; chairs, and the floor itself, covered with the skins of a score of wild beasts, were strewn with them. At the far end of the room he saw deeper and darker shelves, where gleamed faintly in the lamplight rows upon rows of vials and bottles and strange instruments of steel and glass. A sentinel in the wilderness—a student called in a desolation! These were the thoughts that leaped into his mind, and he knew that in this room Jeanne had loved, and that here, between these centuries-old strange things, amid an environment of strange silence, of whispering air, her visions of the world had come. Here, separated from all her kind, God, nature and a father had made her of their handiwork.

The old man pointed Philip to a chair near the large table, and sat down close to him. At his feet was a stool covered with silvery lynx-skin, and D'Arcambal looked at this, his strong, grim face relaxing into a gentle smile of happiness. He was carried by the old man's look on a case, walking on the front path. She opened the door, and seeing who her visitor was, emitted a little shriek of surprise. "Well, Miss Prim," came in mocking tones, "you might at least as a friend in my middle name to his first letter. Barbara, after the shock of receiving a letter from a perfectly strange man, and after a hard day with her stern looking-up, recklessly answered it, and all the others which came after it. Possibilities ceased and transports turned homeward, bearing their precious cargoes."

CHAPTER XVII

HE was an old man, beard and hair were white. He was as tall as Philip, his shoulders were broader, his chest narrower, and as he stood under the light of one of the hanging lamps, his face shined with a pale glow, one hand upon his breast, the other extended, it seemed to Philip that all of the greatness and past glory of Fort o' God, whatever they may have been, were personified in the man he beheld. He was dressed in soft buckskin, like Pierre. His hair and beard grew in wild disorder, and from under shaggy eyebrows there burned a pair of deep-set eyes of the color of blue steel. He was a man to inspire awe and yet young, white-

ness touched. Their faces were close. The two men who loved Jeanne d'Arcambal above all else on earth gazed for a silent moment into each other's eyes.

"They have told me," said D'Arcambal, softly. "You have brought my Jeanne home through death. Accept a father's blessing, and with it—this!"

He stepped back and swept his arms about the great room. "Everything—everything—would have gone with her," he said. "You had let her die, I should have died. My God, what peril she was in! In saving her you saved me. So you are welcome here, as a son. For the first time since my Jeanne was a babe Fort o' God offered itself to a man who is a stranger and his hospitality is yours so long as its walls hang together. And as they have done this for upward of 200 years, M'sieur Philip, we may conclude that our friendship is to be without end."

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"SOMEBODY'S STENOG"—This Must Be Some Novel

WHAT IS IT CAN? THAT PAPER BACK NOVEL THAT WAS IN MY DESK. THAT'S WHAT IS IT! THE BOSS GAVE ME THE RAZOR 'STENDAY ABOUT READING TRASH BUT IT SEEMS THERE'S A FLOCK OF GOOD WASTE COLLECTORS ROUND HERE!

I'M NOT MENTIONING ANY NAMES, BUT SOME DARK HAIRED PERSON IN THIS DUMP IS A CROOK!

WELL, I'LL EAT LUNCH! THEN IF I FIND THE LADY-LAP IN THAT OFFICE WHO INVADDED THE GINETTY OF MY DESK MY LADY HANDS WILL CRUSH HIM OR SHE WITH THE STRENGTH OF A GIANT!

THE BOSS!

THE BOSS!

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